

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 DHA-02 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02

SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 /066 W

-----026229 211243Z /53

R 211005Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY VICTORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 426

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE VICTORIA 350

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, SE

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL DECREE GIVES NEW POWERS TO SEYCHELLES POLICE

1. SEYCHELLES' PRESIDENT FRANCE ALBERT RENE HAS ISSUED SUPPLEMENT TO PUBLIC SECURITY ACT (1954) GRANTING BROAD NEW POWERS TO MINISTER OF STATE FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS BERLOUIS AND POLICE COMMISSIONER PILLAY FOR USE DURING PERIODS OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY. UNDER PROVISIONS OF PRESIDENTIAL DECREE, INTERNAL SECURITY AUTHORITIES, INCLUDING "SPECIAL CONSTABLES" (A EUPHEMISM FOR RENE'S CIVILIAN IRREGULARS), ARE EMPOWERED TO A) REQUISITION ANY VEHICLE, B) REGULATE THE MOVEMENT AND TRANSPORT OF PEOPLE, C) ENTER ANY PREMISES, D) ARREST OFFENDERS AGAINST PUBLIC SECURITY WITHOUT A WARRANT AND E) SEIZE ANY PROPERTY PRESUMED TO BE USED TO COMMIT AN OFFENSE AGAINST PUBLIC SECURITY. POWERS CONFERRED BY NEW REGULATIONS ARE TO BE EXERCISED BY THE PRESIDENT "IN HIS ABSOLUTE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DISCRETION".

2. DECREE ALSO STIPULATES THAT ANYONE WHO ACTS, SPEAKS OR WRITES ANYTHING LIKELY TO BE PREJUDICIAL TO PUBLIC SAFETY OR TO UNDERMINE THE AUTHORITY OF GOVERNMENT IS GUILTY OF AN OFFENSE.

3. ANYONE FOUND GUILTY OF COMMITTING ANY OFFENSE UNDER THE NEW REGULATIONS IS LIABLE TO HEAVY FINES AND IMPRISONMENT FOR A MAXIMUM TERM OF THREE YEARS.

4. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT RENE, ATTORNEY GENERAL LOUSTEAU-LALANNE AND COMMISSIONER PILLAY HAVE ALL STATED THAT PURPOSE BEHIND DECREE IS TO PROVIDE STAND-BY POWERS IN "EMERGENCIES" ONLY, NEW LAW DOES NOT SO STATE. LEFT UNDEFINED IS WHAT CONSTITUTES AN EMERGENCY.

5. COMMENT: PROVISIONS IN DECREE RELATIVE TO INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS OF FREE EXPRESSION ARE AT ODDS WITH IMAGE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING TO PROJECT OF OPENNESS TO DIFFERING OPINIONS AND CRITICISM. GOVERNMENT DAILY, THE NATION, HAS INVITED READERS TO SUBMIT VIEWS ON GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PERFORMANCE FOR PAPER'S OPINION COLUMN. ALSO, AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, RENE HAS ANNOUNCED ESTABLISHMENT OF SMALL DEPARTMENT IN PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO RECEIVE COMPLAINTS FROM PUBLIC. FINALLY, GOVERNMENT HAS RESCINDED REQUIREMENT OF FORMER REGIME THAT ALL CHURCH SERMONS UNDERGO CENSORSHIP.

6. ATTORNEY GENERAL LOUSTEAU-LALANNE IN JUNE 21 MEETING TOLD ME GOVERNMENT IS "AWARE OF STRONG ADVERSE PUBLIC REACTION TO DECREE" AND WILL PROBABLY CANCEL SOME PORTIONS NEXT WEEK. IN THIS REGARD, HE SAID INFRINGEMENTS ON FREE SPEECH "ARE ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE DROPPED".

MATTSON

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Message Attributes

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